

John Nelson House
North Great Road
Lincoln
Middlesex County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-830

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11-

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

JOHN NELSON HOUSE

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11-

Location: North Great Road, Lincoln, Middlesex County, Massachusetts.

Present Owner: W. Newton Nelson

Present Use: Residence

Significance: This structure is an excellent example of the early 19th century wooden frame farm house, especially notable for its simple detailing and brick end wall construction. It was built by John Nelson, carpenter for his father Josiah Nelson. The building process is thoroughly documented with bills and receipts for work done.

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. A two story wooden frame farm house, typical of the early 19th century architecture of this locale, especially notable for simplicity of detail and brick end walls. Very little modification of the original structure.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Foundations: Perimeter foundation made of rubble below grade, brick above grade faced with cut and hammered granite (front and side elevations only). Brick pier foundations under fire places, wooden or concrete lintles. Miscellaneous wooden posts.
2. Wall construction: Wooden frame. Horizontal lapped wooden clapboards 4'-0" long, lapped end joints, weathered 3". North wall covered with wooden shingles, 6" exposed. Brick end-walls appear to be bearing walls, common bond.
3. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Cut granite steps at major entrances. Modern back porch of no significance.
4. Chimneys: Brick chimneys at end walls, of two or three compartments each. Chimney in all.

5. Openings:

- a. Front doorway of main block has flat entablature with spiral reeded courses in cornice, flat arched headlight (one piece of glass) simple pilasters. Six-panel wooden door. Secondary entrance into ell.
- b. Windows: Original work, double-hung six-over-six-sash, no shutters.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape: Hip roof in general, with gable roof on ell, lean-to roof over kitchen.
- b. Covering: Asphalt shingles over wooden shingles and sheathing.
- c. Eaves and cornice: Boxed eaves, simple wooden cornice with spiral course on central block, front only.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Full basement under central block only, stair under front stair from kitchen; divided by 4" brick partition perpendicular to front of house. Half basement under ell, access by door in back foundation wall.
 - b. First floor: Central entry, two rooms symmetrical to entrance and stair hall, fireplaces on exterior walls. Old kitchen ell (18th century) right rear with attached woodshed and carriage house. Modern kitchen behind two central rooms; dining room with fireplace; secondary entrance; wood room with fireplace.
 - c. Second floor: Two rooms approximately symmetrical to stair, with fireplaces in exterior walls, small room between off stair hall. Bed rooms over kitchen, dining room, and work rooms were originally working loft for carpenter-owner.
2. Stairways: Front stairs behind front entrance all run perpendicular to house. Secondary stair from kitchen to second floor. Modern basement stair under front stair (traditional location).
3. Flooring: Some original wooden boards 12" - 15"; wooden boards and strips at 4" - 12" wide (1930) 4" hardwood (1900) on subfloor. First floor framing joists 21" on center, 7" x 7" beams, 5' - 0" on center perpendicular to front of house.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster ceiling. Papered and plastered walls, flush board wainscot to chair rail (some boards 22" wide, others piece work).
 5. Doorways and doors: Six panel (both sides finished) wooden doors. Some four panel (feathered edge one side, recess on other). Simple trim.
 6. Trim: Especially notable fireplace trim, first floor left front, probably influenced by The American Builder's Companion or A New System of Architecture, Asher Benjamin and Daniel Rayners, Ethridge and Bliss Publishers, Charlestown, Massachusetts, 1806, which was in the builder's library. Two downstairs fireplace trim (1900).
 7. Hardware: Variety of thumbblatches, 19th - 20th century hardware. Good weathervane on barn. Iron boot scraper at entry.
 8. Lighting: None of importance
 9. Heating: Exterior end-wall fireplaces in central house. One cast iron fire frame first floor left rear central house. Cooking fireplace, oven and ash pit in 18th century appendage (chimney reworked c. 1810) Notable cooking crane and irons. Modern hot water heating system.
- Site
1. Location: House faces south on the Lexington - Concord Road west of "The Bluff" and entrance to the L. G. Hanscom Air Force Base.
 2. Enclosures: None
 3. Outbuildings: Barn and attached sheds. South barn is original, back portions were added circa 1900.
 4. Landscaping and walks: Of no importance

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August, 1961